

real interviews and record witness statements. Congress has its own internal procedures and investigators for ethics complaints. We have our Ethics Committee. The House has its Ethics Committee. Congress set up procedures for ethics investigations in the lower courts. They exist. Judges are investigated, and people can know where you submit your complaint and how that complaint gets investigated.

The Supreme Court is unique across the entire Federal Government in being impenetrable to investigation, from no ethics inbox, to no process for reviewing a complaint, to no credible report at the end of the day. The highest Court in the land should not be held to the lowest standards in government.

So last week, Congressman HANK JOHNSON and I, joined by Senator BLUMENTHAL and Congressmen NADLER, QUIGLEY, and CICILLINE, reintroduced our Supreme Court Ethics, Recusal, and Transparency Act. Our bill would finally require the Supreme Court to have not just a code of conduct but a real process to enforce that code and other Federal ethics laws.

Our bill would also update judicial ethics laws, ending the ability of judges to ignore conflicts of interest and their recusal obligations; requiring Justices of the Supreme Court to disclose gifts and travel, as other Federal officials do; and exposing the real interests appearing at the Court behind amici curiae who lobby the Court under fake names.

Apparently, there has been a half-hearted effort at the Court to begin to deal with this. The Washington Post reported last week that the Justices discussed for years a binding code of ethics to no result, and the effort seems to have fallen apart. So that leaves Congress in the position that if they won't fix it, we will.

There are many problems plaguing our Supreme Court. Far-right, dark-money interests spent years stacking the Court with their handpicked Justices, who in turn have delivered for those interests at every available opportunity. We need to undo the damage wrought by the Court that dark money built and by those who built it, but we can start—we can start—by bringing basic standards of integrity to the Supreme Court, standards all other judges follow and standards that govern all high-ranking Federal officials across all three branches of Government—officials who are paid by taxpayers to serve the best interests of the American people.

To be continued.

Mr. WHITEHOUSE. I yield the floor.

There being no objection, the material was ordered to be printed in the RECORD, as follows:

SUPREME COURT OF THE UNITED STATES, THE LEGAL OFFICE,  
Washington, DC, November 28, 2022.

Hon. SHELDON WHITEHOUSE,  
U.S. Senate,  
Washington, DC.

Hon. HENRY C. JOHNSON,  
House of Representatives,  
Washington, DC.

DEAR CHAIRMAN WHITEHOUSE AND CHAIRMAN JOHNSON: I am writing in response to your letter dated November 20, 2022.

Justice Alito has said that neither he nor Mrs. Alito told the Wrights about the outcome of the decision in the Hobby Lobby case, or about the authorship of the opinion of the Court. Gail Wright has denied Mr. Schenck's allegation in multiple interviews, saying the account given by Mr. Schenck was "patently not true." (Don Wright is deceased.) Justice and Mrs. Alito became acquainted with the Wrights some years ago because of their support for the Supreme Court Historical Society, and they had a casual and purely social relationship. The Justice never detected any effort on the part of the Wrights to obtain confidential information or to influence anything he did in either an official or private capacity. Mr. Schenck's allegation that Justice Alito or Mrs. Alito gave the Wrights advance word about the outcome in Hobby Lobby or the authorship of the Court's opinion is also uncorroborated. Politico reports that despite several months of efforts, the publication was "unable to locate anyone who heard about the decision directly from either [Justice] Alito or his wife before its release at the end of June 2014." The New York Times stated that "the evidence for Mr. Schenck's account of the breach has gaps."

There is nothing to suggest that Justice Alito's actions violated ethics standards. Relevant rules balance preventing gifts that might undermine public confidence in the judiciary and allowing judges to maintain normal personal friendships. Judicial Conference gift regulations provide that a judge may not accept a gift from a person seeking official action from or doing business with the judge's court or whose interests may be substantially affected by the performance or non-performance of the judge's official duties, with only limited exceptions. See Guide to Judiciary Policy, vol. 2C, Ch. 6, §620.35. The Wrights owned a real estate business in Dayton, Ohio, and to our knowledge, they have never had a financial interest in a matter before the Court. In addition, the term "gift" is defined to exclude social hospitality based on personal relationships as well as modest items, such as food and refreshments, offered as a matter of social hospitality. Id. §620.25(a), (b). Similarly, Justice and Mrs. Alito also did not receive any reportable gifts from the Wrights. Gifts of less than "minimal value" received from one source in a calendar year need not be reported. And gifts do not count toward this threshold if they take the form of food, lodging, or entertainment received as personal hospitality of an individual, or food or beverages which are not consumed in connection with a gift of overnight lodging. See 5 U.S.C. App. §§102(a)(2)(A), 109(5)(D).

Very truly yours,

ETHAN V. TORREY,  
Legal Counsel.

Mr. WHITEHOUSE. I yield the floor.  
The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from North Carolina.

VALENTINE'S DAY

Mr. TILLIS. Mr. President, when I look back at the 8 years I have been in the Senate, I can think of a lot of things I like about this job. I have real-

ly gotten to know staff on both sides of the aisle, a lot of Members on both sides of the aisle, being coached more than once by Elizabeth and Leigh on parliamentary procedure and rules of the Senate—those are all things I like about the Senate. But every year on this day, there is one thing I don't like about the Senate, and that is because 2 out of the last 10 years, Senate business has brought me here instead of being home with my wife on Valentine's Day.

Mr. President, my wife and I have been married for 36 years, and our first two babies—our two babies were born in Atlanta, GA, the Presiding Officer's great State. My wife Susan has been my valentine for 36 years, and I am away from her once again.

So if it wasn't a violation of the rules, I would pick up a sign just like this that says "I love my wife, and I wish her a happy Valentine's Day," but that is against the rules, so I am not going to do that. Instead, I am going to say: Susan Tillis, I love you, and thank you for 36 great years.

Thank you, Mr. President.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection.

The Senator from Indiana.

ABRAHAM LINCOLN

Mr. YOUNG. Mr. President, during the Civil War, Walt Whitman took stock of Abraham Lincoln's appearance. The President had a face, the poet wrote, like a "Hoosier Michelangelo." But Whitman sensed that underneath the lines and the crags were wells of wisdom and tact perfectly suited to the President, hard-earned long ago.

You see, Abraham Lincoln is widely regarded as one of our country's greatest Presidents, a visionary and an inspiring leader who appealed to the highest American ideals and moved our Nation toward a more perfect Union.

Sunday marks the 214th anniversary of Abraham Lincoln's birth. Even today, historians still wrestle with the question, how is a man of such character forged? The answer, I think, can be found in Southern Indiana, near the Ohio River. In 1860, when asked for details of his youth by a biographer, Abraham Lincoln was uncooperative. It could all, he said, "be condensed into a single sentence—the short and simple annals of the poor."

"That's all you or any one can make of it," Lincoln insisted. But, if you will pardon me, I would like to make a little more of it. My colleagues from Kentucky will no doubt point out that Lincoln's birth occurred in their Commonwealth, and as my colleagues from Illinois will likely remind you, when Abraham Lincoln departed for the White House, it was from their State. I will give them this: Lincoln was indeed born in Kentucky, and he did make his name in Illinois. But Abraham Lincoln was a Hoosier. "It was there I grew up," he recalled of Southern Indiana. It was there in Spencer County "I grew to my present enormous height," he once joked.